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Science and Education Administration

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Highlights of “A Comprehensive National Plan for New Initiatives in Home Economics Research, Extension and Higher Education”

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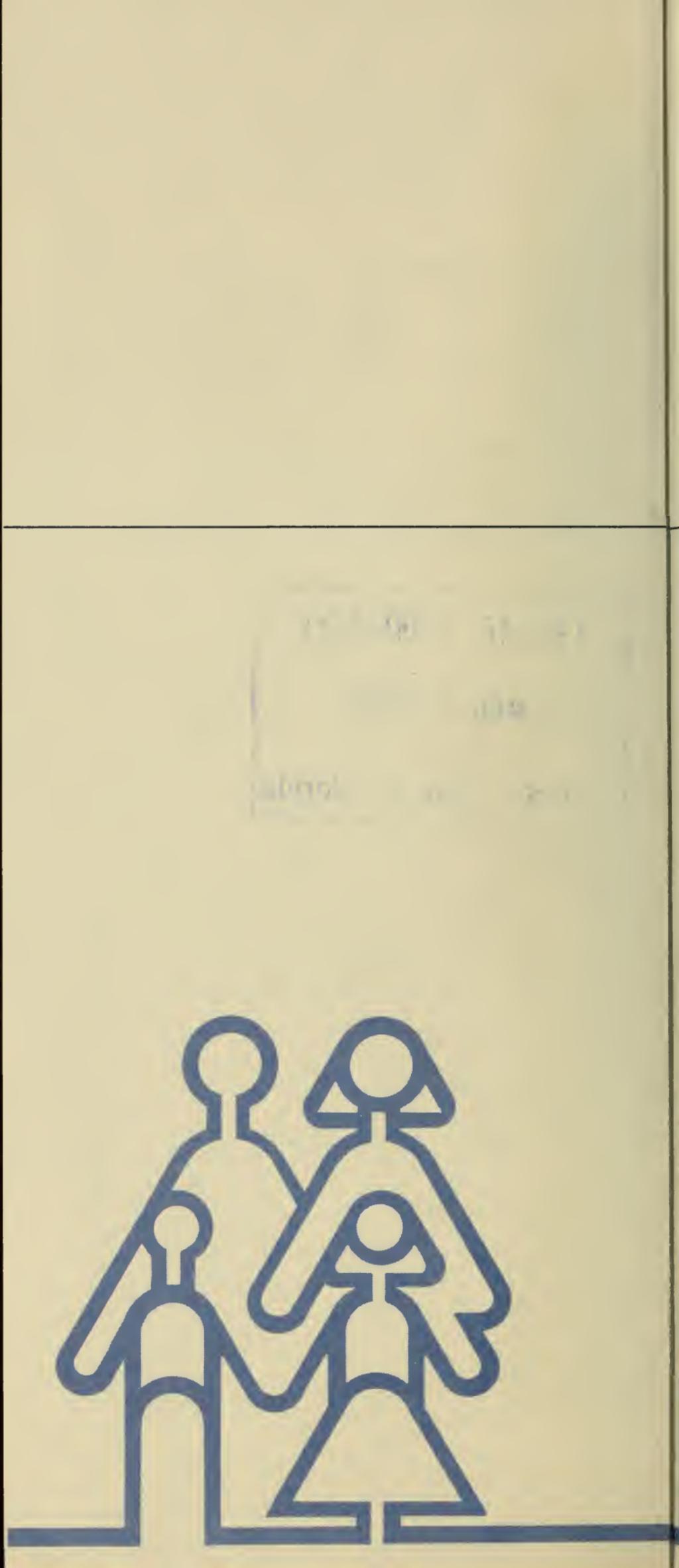
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New Initiatives for Families

American families have the task, vital to the Nation's well being, of caring for their members, promoting individual growth and development, and meeting their needs for food, housing, fuel, and other requirements essential to health and safety. Problems facing families during the decade of the eighties will be serious and will affect every family in the Nation. To handle these problems, families will need new information and skills. The diversity of families and of their value systems requires a similar diversity in both content and delivery of education to them.

Congress in 1977 called for new initiatives in home economics, human nutrition, and family living to respond to these challenges. The research and education initiatives proposed here in response to the congressional mandate will require coordinated effort and support from Federal, State, and local agencies.

New Initiatives for Families

- ... In Family Economic Stability and Security ...
- ... In Energy and Environment ...
- ... In Food, Nutrition, and Health ...
- ... In Family Strengths and Social Environment ...
- ... In Family Required

... In Family
Economic Stability
and Security ...

Focus

Young families

Persons with
limited
opportunities

Families as
consumers

Rural families



The economic well-being of families will be more dependent in the eighties on their income management skills. Inflation, unemployment, higher divorce rates, more working mothers, more single parents, and other changes in families will make it harder for them to manage their resources in the eighties than in the seventies.

Research and education are needed

... to determine future effects on the family of the resource management decisions a family makes early in its life cycle.

... to enable the family to optimize its real income through home-provided goods and services, home-based enterprises, and paid employment.

... to assess the benefits and costs of regulations, market conditions, and policy actions that directly affect economic choices and well-being of families.

... to enable family members to handle their economic responsibilities for management of real property, especially during periods of family transition.

... **In Family Economic Stability and Security . . .**

... **In Energy and Environment . . .**

... **In Food, Nutrition, and Health . . .**

... **In Family Strengths and Social Environment . . .**

New Effort is Required



... In Energy and
Environment ...

Focus

Families making
decisions on
housing, transporta-
tion, and life style

Forecasting and
planning agencies

Agencies developing
resource policies

Families who are
moving or whose
housing require-
ments are changing

Families

Families



Costs and supplies of energy for household use, potential water shortages, and disposal of residues from the production and consumption of consumer products will continue to be issues in the eighties. Rapid increases in energy costs are contributing to inflation nationally, burdening family budgets, and creating further hardship for low-income and elderly families.

Research and education are needed

... on replacing household practices that are inefficient and wasteful of resources with safe and healthful alternatives that conserve resources.

... on use of environmental resources by types of families in their everyday living.

... on implications of alternative resource management policies for the home environment: the tradeoffs with family nutrition and health, home safety and sanitation, family economic and social well-being, and other aspects of family life.

... on housing choices (structures and location) in which resources are used efficiently and family needs and activities related to employment, the community, and sources of essential goods and services are considered.

... on managing expenses resulting from rising energy prices in a manner that safeguards family nutrition and health, safety and sanitation, and long-term economic security.

... on coping with emergency situations caused by energy or water shortages, or other interruptions to supply.

... In Energy and Environment . . .

... In Food, Nutrition, and Health . . .

... In Family Strengths and Social Environment . . .

New Effort is Required

... In Food,
Nutrition, and
Health ...

Focus

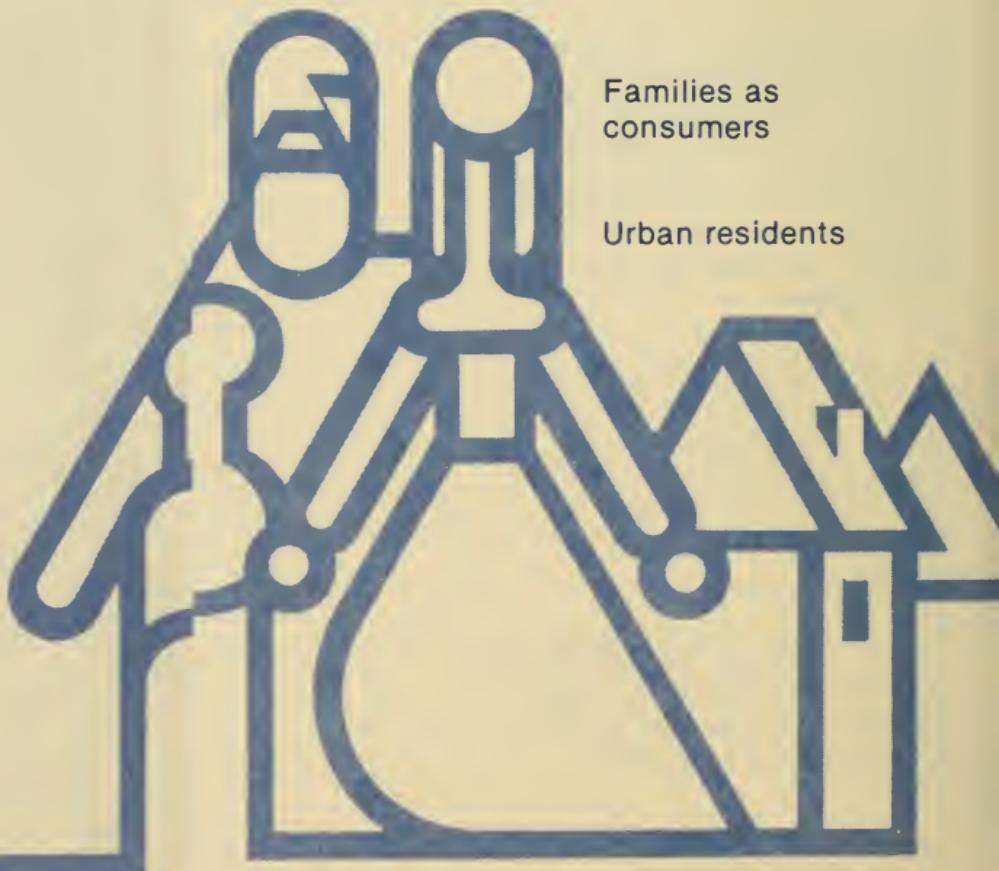
Families as
consumers

Schools, food
industry, families
with special
resource-
management needs

Ethnic and cultural
minorities

Families as
consumers

Urban residents



Nutrition affects the health of every individual from the time of conception to death. Health care costs are rapidly escalating, and the realization is growing that Americans' major physical and mental health problems are chronic and not able to be quickly and easily treated. These two factors are stimulating families to want to avoid the high cost of health care by preventing illness.

Research and education are needed

... on adaptation of dietary standards and recommendations to family and individual needs and problems, household practices, resources, and stages in family life cycle.

... on multidisciplinary approaches which emphasize nutrition's role in promoting health (informed food choices, diet-related health risks, and methods of improving nutritional quality of food).

... on home food preparation methods that incorporate dietary standards, conserve nutritional quality, are economical and energy efficient, and are acceptable to ethnic and cultural groups.

... on food safety, food handling in households, and recognition of hazards.

... on providing information and referral services in the communities of the eighties regarding food and nutrition programs available to families.

... **In Food, Nutrition, and Health . . .**

... **In Family Strengths and Social Environment . . .**

New Effort is Required



... In Family
Strengths
and Social
Environment ...

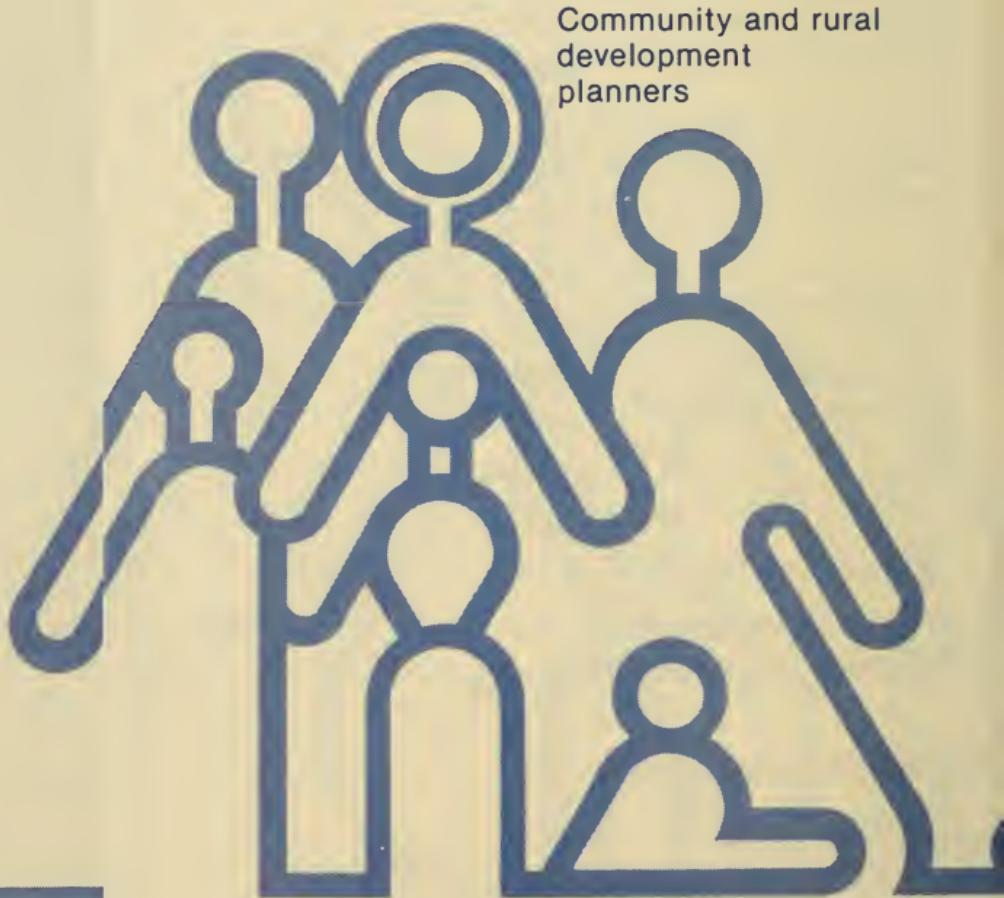
Focus

Child-care providers,
single parents,
teenage parents

Affected families

Multigenerational
households,
geographically
mobile families,
transient families

Community and rural
development
planners



Family composition and life cycle significantly influence how families will handle their tasks. Families in the eighties will cope with the cumulative effects of several decades of change — as more young adults postpone marriage, go to work, and establish separate households . . . as incidence of child abuse, child runaways, and children in trouble continues . . . as more married couples separate, divorce, or experience death of the spouse . . . as more adults live alone.

Research and education are needed

... on parenting skills.

... on identifying and managing, as a family, the problems associated with changing social and economic conditions (inflation, employment outlook), changes in family structure (divorce, death of spouse, retirement), and other critical life events (moving, job change, unemployment).

... on the role of the community and relatives in helping families plan for and adjust to changes through the life cycle.

... on the place of communities, institutions, and services in the functioning and well-being of families.

... In Family Strengths and Social Environment . . .
New Effort is Required





New Effort is Required

To help improve the quality of life for millions of American citizens in the eighties, the Nation will need:

... more research capability to develop information to help solve problems of families as consumers.

... expanded extension programs bringing information to serve families — that is, more effective needs assessment, more effective use of communication technology, and more effective program evaluation.

... expanded professional education to train family and consumer research scientists and educators.

Detailed proposals have been developed for work to be done by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, land-grant colleges and universities, cooperative extension services, and other cooperating institutions with programs in the food, agricultural, and family sciences.

Background

The Congress, in the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, called for new Federal initiatives to improve and expand research and extension programs in home economics, human nutrition, and family living. In 1979 the Science and Education Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture established a national steering committee, with representatives from the land-grant college and university system, other institutions, professional groups, and user organizations (groups that use research results and extension information). The steering committee, after reviewing reports, recommendations, and issues,

identified a few high-priority initiatives representing areas needing significant amounts of research, extension, and higher education. The proposed initiatives were assessed and accepted by 400 users, professional persons, and administrators.

This brochure highlights findings and recommendations of the national study. A complete report of this study and a plan for action will appear as "A Comprehensive National Plan for New Initiatives in Home Economics Research, Extension, and Higher Education." Obtain a copy of Miscellaneous Publication No. 1405 from the Science and Education Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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